



DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Washington, D.C. 20520

10/29/79

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MEMORANDUM FOR DR. ZBIGNIEW BRZEZINSKI  
THE WHITE HOUSE

Subject: Proposal that the President Meet with  
Jacobo Timerman

Jacobo Timerman, the Argentine newspaper editor and publisher who was recently released from house arrest and expelled from Argentina, will travel to New York on October 29 to accept the Hubert Humphrey Freedom Award from B'nai B'rith. Mr. Timerman has asked to meet with President Carter on October 30 or 31. We believe such a meeting should take place in light of President Carter's personal intervention with President Videla on behalf of Mr. Timerman.

The Timerman case has attracted widespread interest and sympathy in this country among private groups, Members of Congress, and the general public. His visit to Washington will be the focus of considerable public and press attention and will include meetings with Members of Congress. For many people in the U.S., Argentina, and abroad, his case symbolized the human rights situation in Argentina. A meeting with Mr. Timerman would provide the President an opportunity publicly to welcome Mr. Timerman's release and to express our Government's hope that it marks the beginning of new efforts by the Government of Argentina to restore respect for human rights and the rule of law. The meeting would also provide fresh public evidence of the Administration's continuing high-level commitment to the promotion of human rights as a central element of U.S. foreign policy.

The attached paper provides background information on Mr. Timerman's detention and on efforts to secure his release.

Peter Tarnoff  
Executive Secretary

Attachment:

As stated.

Drafter: HA/HR:PJBlood:diw  
ext:21180

Clearances:  
HA/HR:CB Salmon, Jr.  
ARA/ECA:Gwhitman (subs)  
HA:PDorian (draft)

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BACKGROUND ON THE TIMERMAN CASE

Jacobo Timerman, publisher and editor of the Buenos Aires newspaper La Opinion, was detained by Argentine security forces in April, 1977. He was held incommunicado for several months, and severely tortured during that period. Although a military court found Mr. Timerman innocent of any wrongdoing, he remained in prison by executive order. The Argentine Supreme Court subsequently ruled last year that no legal basis existed for his continued detention. The Executive, however, ignored this ruling and merely transferred Mr. Timerman from prison to house arrest. Armed guards occupied his apartment, and he was permitted few visitors or contact with the outside world other than his family and his rabbi. He was forbidden, of course, to leave the apartment and was unable to attend his son's wedding in Israel earlier this year or to accept the Hubert Humphrey Freedom Award from B'nai B'rith in New York this summer.

Because Jacobo Timerman had earned a reputation for excellence in journalism and for his honest and courageous portrayal of human rights abuses, his arrest and continued detention drew widespread criticism in international journalistic circles, as well as among Members of Congress and other important sectors of American opinion. His continued deprivation of liberty, after having been fully exonerated by the courts, clearly illuminated the Military Junta's arbitrariness as well as the impotence of the Argentine judiciary in the face of flagrant abuses. His case came to symbolize the plight of the thousands of Argentines who have been deprived of their liberty during the last 3-1/2 years, of whom about 1400 remain in executive detention.

Considerable Congressional and public interest developed in this case. Numerous articles appeared in the U.S. press, including countless editorials and an essay by Timerman's son this summer in Newsweek, and important nongovernmental organizations joined their voices in the general protest. His release last month was front-page news in the major dailies.

The President raised Mr. Timerman's case with President Videla when the latter was in Washington for the Panama Canal Treaties signing ceremony. Secretary Vance

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